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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NMCP Flu Vaccine Update

NAVAL MEDICAL CENTER PORTSMOUTH, Va. – Naval Medical Center Portsmouth and its branch health clinics have begun administering flu vaccine for the 2006-2007 influenza season.

Vaccination with the nasal spray flu vaccine is recommended for healthy, non-pregnant people aged 5 to 49, and is available now. The traditional flu shot is approved for use in people aged 6 months and older, including healthy people, those who are pregnant, and those with chronic medical conditions. Flu shots are available now for active duty service members with priority given to deploying personnel.

“We are expecting additional quantities of the injectible flu vaccine by mid-to-late November for beneficiaries who are outside the age 5-to-49 parameters or who may have a medical condition that puts them in a high-risk category,” said Cmdr. Robin M. Wilkening, NMCP’s Director for Public Health Services. “Their health care provider can advise them about the appropriate choice of vaccine. Beneficiaries should plan to get their flu shot as soon as vaccine stocks become available, and we will let our beneficiaries know as soon as we have additional injectible vaccine.”

(more)

Wilkening said that it is very important for all health care workers to be vaccinated against influenza each year.

Updates on flu vaccination availability at NMCP and its branch health clinics will be featured on the NMCP Web site, www-nmcp.mar.med.navy.mil, or beneficiaries may call their local clinic for information on times and vaccine availability.

Wilkening added, “As we receive more vaccines, we will set up special flu shot clinic hours as we have done in past years.”

There are two types of flu vaccines. The nasal-spray flu vaccine is made with live, weakened flu viruses that do not cause the flu. The traditional flu shot, which is injected into the arm, is an inactivated vaccine made with killed virus. Regardless of vaccine type, flu vaccine does not cause the flu.

Each vaccine contains three influenza viruses – one A (H3N2) virus, one A (H1N1) virus, and one B virus. The viruses in the vaccine change each year based on international surveillance and scientists' estimations about which types and strains of viruses will circulate in a given year.

About two weeks after a person is vaccinated, antibodies develop in the body to protect the person against the flu.

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